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ABSTRACT

Designed as an introduction to individualized reading instruction, this pamphlet considers the purpose of individualization, implementing individualized instruction, facility changes, diagnosis, evaluation, and individual student needs. The four appendixes feature samples of a student record, a student plan sheet, a teacher record, and a teacher conference sheet. (LL)

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INDIVIDUALIZED READING

AND YOU

State Board of Education
Illinois Office of Education
Springfield, Illinois 62706

CS 001 808

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FOREWORD

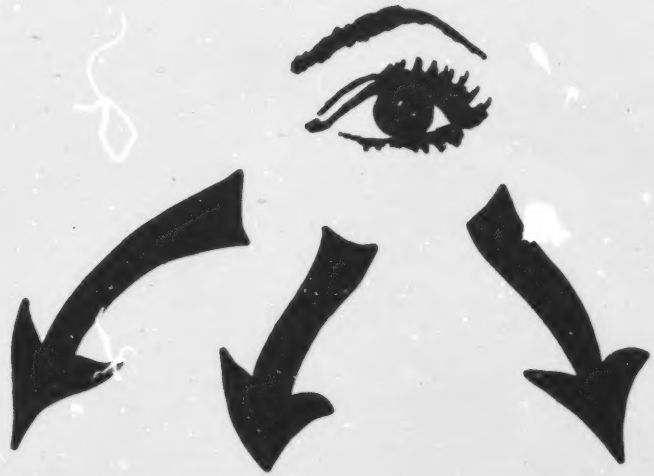
Reading is a fundamental skill necessary to function effectively in today's society. Its importance in the instructional program cannot be denied since reading skills are so essential to success in other areas. Those educators who endeavor to equip students with reading skills are to be commended, for their task is a difficult and challenging one.

To provide guidance and assistance in this ongoing venture, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction presents to the teachers of Illinois *Individualized Reading and You*.

INDIVIDUALIZING READING IS
NOT NECESSARILY:

·ALIKE IN EVERY SITUATION·
·DISCARDING THE PAST·
·LESS EXPENSIVE·
·LAISSEZ-FAIRE·
·ONE TO ONE·
·EASIER·
·NEW·

INDIVIDUALIZED READING IS A NEW WAY OF



STUDENTS EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Indivdualized reading is not new. It has been cn the educational scene since the turn of the century. Much has been written regarding individualized reading and yet we find teachers beginning and experienced, still feeling uncertain when initiating such a program.

This booklet was designed to serve as an introduction, a reminder, a reference, and a stimulant for those who wish to aid boys and girls in developing their reading potential as well as fostering a joy of reading.

In order to bridge the gap between theory and practice, this booklet attempts to discuss the process in chronological order. Each topic is a single unit unto itself; however, together they formulate a total picture of individualized reading from a practical standpoint.

Just as educators must realize that individual differences are found in students, so must it be noted that individual differences are found in teachers. Therefore, individualized reading programs will vary in degree of implementation and structure. This booklet is not intended to be supreme but rather an aid for those who have the vision and courage to search for a better way to teach children to read.

WHY INDIVIDUALIZE?

The democratic society of today makes it imperative that school districts develop a democratic curriculum based on the individual's uniqueness. For centuries educators have discussed the individual differences found in students. These differences are perhaps the most important reason for individualizing instruction. All educators know and recognize that students vary in interests, abilities, and modes of learning. If they accept that individual differences exist, both in ability to learn and environmental experiences which contribute to reading desires and attitudes, then they must also accept that there is no one type of approach or material that will fulfill the needs of all children. Therefore, individualized reading by its very nature, must be eclectic, drawing from all approaches and materials those things which are appropriate for students.

In recent years, reading instruction by ability grouping within classroom has received much attention. No one can deny that moving from whole class instruction to ability grouping is a move toward individualization; however, it is only a small step.

Through seeking, self-pacing, self-selection, self-directing, individualized reading can help develop a positive self-image within each student. No longer will there be a "low" group or "poor reader" group. Each child, regardless of ability or interest, will receive instruction based upon needs. This is not meant to infer that grouping is omitted from individualized reading but rather grouping is used in a more flexible and efficient manner. Groups appear and disappear when needs arise, thus using both resources and facilities to the best advantage.

Individualized reading provides for both individual differences and the development of a positive self-concept. Through the use of various approaches and materials, a student develops independence and responsibility when given the option of choosing instructional materials or alternative ways of learning. As a result of this, the student develops in a "freedom of choice atmosphere" the realization that his opinion is valued, and he is responsible for carrying through those tasks which he helped select.

Before individualized reading can be implemented, it is necessary for educators to consider the following statements. Then, and only then, can a commitment toward individualization become part of a personal philosophy.

1. Learning patterns vary among children. No one method can meet the reading needs of all students. Alternatives must become part of the reading instructional program.
2. Children cannot be told how to think but must be given encouragement and opporunitites with a free atmosphere.
3. Learning is an internal process which must involve the student in a task. A change of behavior precedes learning.
4. Children thrive on success and each

educational experience must have this as its goal.

5. Recognizing and developing the talents and differences in children must be paramount.
6. The backgrounds and experiences vary in children. Therefore, each child faces a learning situation differently.
7. Children can and should be allowed to establish goals and evaluate their progress.
8. Motivation factors from within make self-selection and self-pacing a possibility for children.
9. Self-discipline and self-control are internal processes that cannot be controlled by an outside adult.
10. Children can learn from many individuals. Social values develop from child-to-child learning situations.
11. Often, the most profound learning which takes place is incidental or stems from an unstructured situation.

If, after considering the rationale for individualized reading, educators find that they can freely accept the philosophy, they are then ready to begin. For the true educator will find anything less to be hypocritical.

Marco

feeling of privacy for those using the "Reading Area." Establish an area where you, the teacher, can have the privacy you need for individual conferences with children or individual assistance the child might need at any given time.

An individualized reading program is partially dependent upon the diversity of reading materials. Two major considerations are interests of children and range of reading abilities of children. An attempt should be made to secure books, magazines, pamphlets, and other pertinent matter which reflect the interests of children; various hobbies and crafts; and the content of other subject areas such as social studies, health, science. Paperback books have been extremely successful in individualizing reading programs as they are inexpensive, space savers, easily carried about, and for the somewhat reluctant reader, they represent something other than "school books."

While the printed materials are being gathered, it is important that attitudes toward reading and books are enhanced. Books and stories could be read to children. Children could read to each other or to small groups of peers or to groups of younger children in other classes. Books of or containing plays can provide the basis of many creative activities. The designing of book jackets and posters to "advertise" books can be projects of value. Discussion of authors, stories, characters, and news articles are good atmosphere builders. A great deal of creative activities, potentially, can come from the individualized reading program. In fact, most often, a good reading program will encompass or reflect the total language arts program. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills will be in constant use and children will be refining their skills in all of these areas. The end products (children) should be creative, independent, hightly motivated learners.

Arrange various activity areas in the room. As a child is reading or after he has finished with a selection, he might wish to illustrate the story, do some writing activities, build a model of some kind, use reference materials, tape record, or perhaps a small group might wish to discuss what they have read. Places should be arranged so that these activities could be carried out with the least amount of interference for those who wish to work independently or for the individual or group working directly with the teacher. Areas for tape recording, typing, listening stations, discussion, and other "high noise level" activities might be at the opposite end of the room from the reading or "instructional" area.

As in all learning situations, the teacher is a key factor in an individualized reading program. He first must establish approximate reading levels so that adequately readable books are secured. Second, he must be a diagnostic teacher. As he perceives problems, he must be equipped to deal with them. An extremely important part of the program deals with the constant diagnosing of needs and the individual and group instruction which should be ongoing. A check list of skills and a needs chart would be quite helpful to the teacher.

The teacher needs to develop some form of record keeping system. This can be as simple as a check list, as complicated as anecdotal notes, or a combination. Usually a folder is created for each child. In this folder are the records of books read, skill materials the student might currently be using, records of those skills mastered, dates of appointments for conferences, and other pertinent data. The folder can be kept by the student, by the teacher, or placed in a mutually accessible area for both.

It is important to note at this point that an individualized reading program is based upon the concept of respect for the individual child. The child is not placed in competition with those who are more capable; likewise, he is not restricted by moving with a group when he is the more capable person. Therefore, it is quite important to stress the strengths of the student. His folder should reflect those skills and concepts the student has mastered. It is unnecessary to constantly record and highlight the weak areas. If this child's folder does not indicate mastery of a particular skill, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the skill has not been checked and it is not known whether this is a trouble area or not. Second, the skill is in a trouble area, but no work has been performed on it as yet. Third, it may be a trouble area; however, the student needs to master other skills before getting to that one. Unless it is something the student needs – on the spot – so he is able to continue with a story or project – notation could probably wait until whatever readiness is necessary has been achieved.

During the conferences, it is important that the teacher is able to ascertain information quickly and somewhat accurately. A set of guide questions might be established so the teacher can discuss any particular book the student has read or is reading. The teacher does *not* have to read all of the books the children are reading or all that are in the classroom library.

The conference should be kept on a positive note. Students should not dread the conference time. In fact, it should be a highlight.

No child should be skipped, ignored, or passed over. *Every* student must have his turn.

There are alternatives the teacher can use in setting up conference appointments. The teacher can schedule an appointment for everyone and just continue rotating the schedule. The teacher can post a sheet with appointment times and dates and the students can freely sign up for the conferences. The students can freely sign up for whatever day they want and the teacher can then post times for that day each morning; thereby, allowing the student to be responsible for keeping his own appointments. (For a more complete and detailed discussion see *Reading in the Elementary School* by Jeanette Veatch, Ronald Press, New York, 1966.)

WHAT PART DOES DIAGNOSIS PLAY IN THE INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM?

The success of any instructional reading program is closely related to the ability of the classroom teacher to utilize diagnostic techniques into the daily instructional procedures has been termed "the diagnostic teaching of reading." Individualized reading instruction can only become a reality if these techniques are included in the instructional procedures used by the classroom teacher.

WHAT IS CLASSROOM READING DIAGNOSIS?

Reading diagnosis is a continuous process whereby the classroom teacher plans and uses techniques which help reveal the reading strengths and weaknesses of individual students. This information is recorded, analyzed and used by the teacher in developing and modifying instructional reading procedures. The instructional procedures in an individualized reading program are based upon the classroom teacher's ability to use appropriate diagnostic techniques and to interpret the information gleaned from those techniques. Once correct interpretation of the diagnostic information occurs, viable instructional techniques and instructional media can be selected from the range of available option.

PURPOSE OF DIAGNOSIS

The purpose of classroom diagnosis is to aid the teacher in constructing individualized instructional procedures. This is to say that once the classroom teacher knows enough about each student's individual reading behaviors, then the teacher can prescribe the type of instructional procedures which are most likely to help the student become a more competent reader.

INFORMAL DIAGNOSIS

Diagnostic procedures are usually classified according to: (1) who does the diagnosis, (2) where the diagnosis occurs, (3) the types of techniques and materials used in the diagnosis, and (4) the amount and the depth of the diagnostic information collected. Since this chapter is directed to the classroom teacher, the type of diagnosis emphasized in the following paragraphs can be classified as informal diagnosis. Informal diagnostic procedures are characterized by the following:

1. The classroom teacher does the diagnosis.
2. The diagnosis is done in the classroom.
3. The techniques call for the use of informal tests based upon the student's reading books and practice materials.
4. The diagnosis provides the teacher with information concerning the student's ability to respond to the present classroom instructional activities.

In order for informal diagnosis to become a viable procedure, the reading teacher must know what type of diagnostic information is important, and he must know procedures for obtaining this information. Knowledge of both the types of diagnostic information needed and the "how" of getting the information provides direction for the classroom teacher.

TYPES OF DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION TO SEEK

There are several types of information which should be sought through the use of informal diagnostic procedures. The classroom teacher should have a general idea about the following:

1. student's general health
2. student's ability to see clearly
3. student's ability to hear speech sounds
4. student's instructional, independent and frustration reading level
5. student's oral reading behaviors
6. student's silent reading behaviors
7. student's ability to comprehend and retain information
8. student's ability to decode new words

INFORMAL DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING STUDENT'S VISION AND HEARING

Two aspects of a student's general health which bear directly upon his or her ability to process classroom instructional information are the aspect of vision and hearing. Since most classroom learning is initially processed through the student's visual and auditory modalities, it is important for the classroom teacher to be actively on the lookout for student behaviors which might be symptoms of visual or auditory acuity problems. The following student behaviors may be symptoms of visual problems:

1. squinting
2. frequent headaches
3. red, watery eyes
4. tilting of corrective glasses forward
5. rubbing eyes frequently
6. holding book too far from eyes
7. holding book too close to eyes

The following may be behaviors related to hearing problems:

1. turning of the head so that favored ear is turned toward the speaker
2. cupping the ear with a hand
3. excessive questions such as, "what did you say?"
4. inattention during class discussion

If a combination of any of the above behaviors manifest themselves within a student's repertoire of behaviors, the classroom teacher should observe, take note and contact the appropriate professional such as school

substitutes any word for the word on the flash card, write the student's response above the word on the list.

d. If the student reads the word incorrectly, but immediately corrects the error, write a "C" in front of the word he corrected.

e. The standard for a correct response to the words presented on the flash card is: (1) the student pronounces the word correctly within five seconds after exposure to the flash cards, or (2) the student pronounces the word incorrectly but immediately corrects his response.

DETERMINING INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL FROM THE DOLCH LIST

McBroom, Sparrow and Eckstein (1944) devised a scale for determining reader level by using the Dolch Word List. The scale follows:

1. *0-75 words* pronounced correctly equals *pre-primer reading level*
2. *76-120 words* pronounced correctly equals *primer reading level*
3. *121-170 words* pronounced correctly equals *first grade reading level*
4. *171-210 words* pronounced correctly equals *second grade reading level*
5. *211+ words* pronounced correctly equals *third grade reading level*

Teacher Made Word Lists. The Dolch Word List is a superb device for assessing student's ability to read instantaneously the basic service words of our language. However, after second grade, the Dolch List cannot provide an estimate of a student's instructional reading ability. The teacher in an individualized reading program always holds the option of creating a word list representing the words in the material to be read by the student.

Procedure The following procedures are suggested as steps to follow in developing and using teacher made word lists:

1. The reading teacher should compile a list of fifty words from the reader or textbooks from which the student is instructed.
2. To compile the list, the teacher should choose every fifth consecutive word in a section near the beginning of the text.
3. The student's copy is a list of words clearly typed on a sheet of bond paper and covered by a plastic sheet for protection. The teacher should also have a copy of the word list. The teacher's word list should be typed on a ditto master and multiple copies run off for future use.
4. The teacher should ask the student to pronounce the words aloud one by one. Also the student should be asked the meanings of appropriate words.
5. The student's responses are recorded on the teacher's word list.
6. The teacher should use a marking system similar to that described for the Dolch words.

DETERMINING INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL FROM TEACHER MADE WORD LISTS

The criteria for determining a student's instructional reading level from teacher made

word lists is that of a 90% to 95% criteria. This is to say that the student pronouncing the words on the word list should miss no more than five words out of fifty and should have no more than forty-eight correct. Thus, if a student reads between forty-five and forty-eight of the words correctly, the reading material is probably appropriate for instructional purposes.

INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

The most viable diagnostic procedure available to reading teachers is the informal reading inventory. Though word lists are expedient, reading words in isolation is not a true representation of the reading process. The informal reading inventory technique allows the reader to read passages of material and, therefore, provides a more realistic estimate of the reader's abilities.

Description of the IRI. The informal reading inventory (IRI) procedure requires the teacher to select representative passages from the reading materials to be used for instruction. The passages may range from one hundred words in length to a complete story or article. The length of the selected passages is determined by the amount of time the teacher is willing to spend on diagnosis. Once representative passages are selected from materials to be used in the reading class, the teacher constructs a series of comprehension questions to test the student's understanding of the material after the initial reading. Depending upon the type of information he wishes to collect, the reading teacher may have a student read the passage either orally or silently.

Purpose of the IRI. The informal reading inventory diagnostic procedure can be used to collect three basic types of information about a student's reading behavior. First, the IRI helps the reading teacher determine whether the reading materials to be used with the student are appropriate for instructional purposes are too easy or too difficult. Second, the use of an IRI can help the reading teacher diagnose a student's problems with word recognition. Third, the IRI can help the reading teacher diagnose a student's problems in comprehending the reading material.

IRI Standards for Classifying the Difficulty Level of Materials. Reading specialists have set up three standards or categories for labeling the reading difficulty of printed material for any given individual.

Instructional reading level is the level at which a student can read and understand the printed material *with* teacher aid. When teachers use instructional materials, they usually have to preteach hard words and abstruse concepts and provide purposes for the reading assignment.

The independent reading level is the level at which the student can read and understand the printed material *without* teacher aid. Conversely, the frustration reading level is the level at which the student is *unable to understand* the printed material, even with teacher help.

Selection of the IRI Passage. First, locate and select a representative passage from the reading material you plan to use with the student. The length of the passage should be between one hundred and two hundred words.

When selecting passages for the IRI, be careful that the passages have enough content to be comprehended. Second, take note of the readability level of the reading material used. Most reading material is graded, and the publisher of the material usually indicates the difficulty level of the material in the teacher's manual or promotional brochure describing the reading materials. The student can read the passages directly from the material which has been selected. The teacher needs to prepare a set of the passages for himself. This prepared set is to be used to record data; therefore, it should be a typed, double-spaced version of the original passage.

Construction of IRI Questions for Comprehension Check. A set of five questions for checking the student's comprehension of the reading passage is needed. The questions should test the student's comprehension concerning the characters, the event and/or the main ideas and supporting details in the reading passage. Who, what, when, where, and how type questions are appropriate.

Code for Making Word Recognition Errors. If the IRI passages are used for assessing the student's oral reading and word recognition skills, then the reading teacher is required to record the nature and number of errors committed by the student while reading orally. To help the teacher make an accurate record of errors, a tape recorder should be used during the diagnostic session. The following is a recommended coding procedure for marking oral reading and word recognition errors:

1. W X W represents word by word reading.
2. / represents a long hesitation.
3. Place a T.A. above teacher aided words.
4. Write phonic spellings of mispronounced word above the word in the text which was mispronounced. Example: The boy ran (rud) up the hill.
5. Write the substitute word above the word in the text for which the substituted word was made. Example: The boy ran (run) up the hill.
6. Use the symbol $\wedge$ for an addition error, and write in the word(s) which was added. Example: The boy ran $\wedge$ (way) up the hill.
7. Use the symbol ⬭ for word(s) omitted from the text. Example: The boy ran (up) the hill.
8. Use an arrow under word(s) repeated in the text. Example: The boy ran up the hill.

CRITERIA FOR ESTIMATING THE DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF MATERIALS

Some form of criteria is needed to determine whether oral reading performance and comprehension ability should be categorized as instructional, independent, or frustrational on a given set of materials. The following is generally agreed upon criteria:

1. Instructional level for oral reading and word recognition is defined as that level at which the student has between 94% and 97% accuracy in reading the words aloud. Generally, the following reading behaviors are considered as errors: (1) the student cannot pronounce the word; (2) the student mispronounces

the word; (3) the student substitutes one word for another; (4) the student adds one word or a consecutive group of words to the text; (5) the student omits a word of a consecutive group of words from the text; (6) the student repeats a word of consecutive group of words.

2. Instructional level for the comprehension of the text is considered to occur when a student is able to answer correctly between 75% and 90% of the comprehension questions.

If a student were given a two hundred ten word passage to read and was asked to answer ten questions concerning the passage, then the student must pronounce between 189 to 199 words correctly. Likewise, the student must answer between seven and one-half to nine questions correctly before the reading passage could be categorized as being at the student instructional reading level both in word recognition and comprehension.

Organizing the Classroom for the Use of the IRI. Since the IRI is going to be administered within the classroom while class is in session, several techniques can be utilized to make the reader more comfortable and the class more arrangeable. First, arrange the desks in the classroom so that the teacher and the examinee are in the back of the classroom. If the diagnosis takes place at the far end of the rear of the classroom, the student being examined does not need to feel self-conscious about the rest of the class watching and listening. Likewise, with the diagnostic session moved to the rear of the classroom, the distracting aspects of the diagnostic procedures are moved away from the field of vision of the students who are not being tested.

Instructional Teacher/Student Talk for Initiating the IRI Diagnostic Test Session. Before the IRI diagnostic session begins, the teacher should instruct the student being tested as to the purpose of the session. Also, the student should be instructed as to the general reading and thinking behaviors he should exhibit during the session. Example: "Jack, the purpose of this session is to help give me information about how you read. I am going to have you read a series of passages. I want you to read them out loud and read them as smoothly as you can. Think about what you read as you are reading because I am going to ask you questions about the ideas in the passage after you have finished."

Keeping Records. It is important that the reading teacher keep a loose-leaf notebook for the purpose of recording diagnostic information on each student. The following information should be recorded for each student: (see appendix)

1. available standardized test scores
2. instructional reading levels and independent reading levels
3. word recognition strengths and weaknesses
4. oral reading strengths and weaknesses
5. comprehension strengths and weaknesses
6. reading interests

Modification of the IRI Procedures. The reading teacher always has the option to modify diagnostic procedures to accommodate the amount of time available for diagnosis and the nature of the class. There is a simple modification for the administration of the IRI. If the teacher wishes to administer a silent reading inventory, this can be done easily. Students are asked to read the passage silently. After the silent reading, the student orally answers comprehension questions. New codes need to be added for silent reading. These codes are as follows:

1. LP represents lip movement.
2. HM represents head movement.
3. V represents vocalization while reading silently.

USES OF OTHER TYPES OF TESTS FOR DIAGNOSIS

Standardized Tests. Since most school systems administer standardized group reading tests, sometime during the school year, results from such tests can provide diagnostic information. Standardized reading tests are normal and they provide scores which allow the teachers to compare their students in reading performance with similar students across the nation. Standardized tests probably best serve as instruments for assessing general program efficiency and student growth in reading throughout the year. Nevertheless, most standardized group reading tests do test in the areas of vocabulary, comprehension and rate, and these subtest scores may provide the teacher with diagnostic insight as to the students' reading strengths and weaknesses.

Interest Inventories. The reading teacher may wish to develop an interest inventory to assess each student's interests. Knowing a student's interests may give the teacher some insight as to the type of book or story that might appeal to the student. If the reading teacher needs guidance in constructing an interest inventory, this writer suggests the following resource book: Strang, Ruth. "Ways of Ascertaining Reading Interests." *Diagnostic Teaching of Reading*, Second Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969. pp 110-119.

ON-THE-SPOT CLASSROOM DIAGNOSIS

There are many opportunities for the reading teacher to gather diagnostic information on students' reading abilities during the course of the general instructional routine. Class discussion, skill practice activities, individual conference sessions and other activities provide the teacher with continuous information concerning students developing reading behaviors. The most important aspect of diagnostic teaching of reading comes after the initial diagnostic procedures. The teacher who is attempting to individualize reading instruction must continually monitor the difficulty and nature of reading materials which students have selected to read so that students are kept working in materials which are appropriate to their interests and abilities.

The classroom teacher will indeed be ineffective if diagnostic techniques are not incorporated within the general instructional procedures. This writer concedes that diagnosis

takes time. However, diagnosis is an attitude and a commitment toward helping children become more proficient readers. Thus, an all-out commitment toward helping children achieve requires that the classroom teacher preserve and implement and perfect a repertoire of diagnostic techniques to be used day by day, month by month, year by year.

WHAT CHANGES SHOULD I BE PREPARED FOR?

As your individualized reading program begins, each teacher must anticipate many changes. These changes can and do often determine the success of the program.

FACILITY CHANGE

First, the learning environment and facility must be examined for it is difficult, almost impossible, for such a program to develop within a stale, rigid classroom.

The room arrangement is one decision which the teacher must determine herself; however, it should be constantly kept in mind that a relaxed atmosphere will enhance your program tremendously. This change in arrangement should allow for individual movement with the least amount of confusion for others.

Instructional materials, a vital part of any program, should be in abundance. The teacher must be constantly searching for and developing new materials. A change in the concept of "what is an instructional material" must take place.

The antique definition, that is, textbooks and workbooks, should be expanded by viewing anything which increases learning as an instructional material. With this in mind, the teacher can then provide games, media, pictures, and many types of printed material for student use during reading. A central library or media center will provide a valuable extension of the program; however, if one is not available, an individualized reading

program can still be developed. Instructional materials need not be only commercial. Teacher-made materials, by their very nature, are valuable and quite appropriate for individuals. A creative teacher can invent classroom activities which are patterned for specific needs.

Parents are valuable assets in developing materials. Mothers who wish to contribute an hour or two a week may be used as "listeners" or may tape stories for classroom use. Parents may also be of assistance in making classroom games. In most cases, a simple request brings forth a productive crew of workers.

TEACHER CHANGE

Once the learning stage has been set, the teacher must view herself in a new role. In an

individualized reading program, the teacher acts much as a conductor of an orchestra. She must know all of the parts to be played (skills and appropriate instructional materials), when various instruments play (individual and group instruction), who needs additional practice (diagnosis), and how the finished selection should sound (evaluation). In her role, she acts as a facilitator of learning so that readers not only read well, and to their highest potential, but also enjoy reading.

The teacher will find that little time is spent instructing the entire class as a group. Only when a genuine need arises will such a situation exist. The vast majority of her time in class will be spent conferencing or directing small group activities.

The conference is the most important time for both the student and teacher. No individualized reading program can survive without it. This time, selected by either the student or teacher, is used to evaluate, diagnose and to discuss with each student the materials and activities which the student has completed or is pursuing. It is a time when the teacher learns to know her individual children so deeply that they become a team. This relationship enables the teacher to understand the child, his hopes and desires, and enables them to plan future activities. The purpose for a conference may vary from child to child from time to time but the overall goal is to know the child well.

The teacher acts as a vehicle through which the child can grow and develop. Through conference techniques, the teacher can identify particular skills for more than one student which may need instruction. This should be noted on the individual conference sheet (see appendix D). As a natural group begins to develop, the teacher may work with a few students giving the needed instruction and then leave the group when the purpose has been accomplished.

The teacher may also find that from time to time small group instruction is necessary. These groups meet for a specific purpose and then disband. Small groups may also be established for social or discussion purposes. Children are innately gregarious and thus they enjoy meeting with the teacher and peers to discuss material they have read, to dramatize a selection, or to read orally to each other or a group. Skill instruction may also evolve from this type of small group instruction; for example, character interpretation, to contrast and compare.

Another change for the teacher will be her role in record keeping. No longer will she simply grade a stack of workbooks, record letter grades in a grade book, and average those grades at report card time. She must keep continual records with notations of accomplishments, activities, materials, and needs (see Appendices C & D).

Record keeping, the skeleton of the total individualized reading program, makes it necessary for the teacher to quickly and efficiently recognize and evaluate reading progress during a conference, while observing everyday activities, and in guiding student planning. While record keeping procedures may

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE: Student record card.
Develop with student and teacher as a cooperative conference effort. Student keeps and uses card for future planning.

STUDENT RECORD CARD

NAME: (Jill Maloney) DATE: (Jan. 8)

WHAT I AM READING NOW:

(Pippi Goes on Board)

HOW WELL DID YOU READ TODAY?

(You read very well.)

DO I NEED A SKILL GROUP?

(Yes – homonyms)
(next Tuesday)

NEXT CONFERENCE: (When you wish)

WORK I NEED TO DO:

(1. Read to a friend.
2. Find words which sound alike (sheet) but mean different things.
3. Pretend I am Pippi and write a story.)

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE: Teacher Record and Profile Sheet

An accumulative file kept on each student.

STUDENT _____

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL _____

INTERESTS _____

DIAGNOSED WEAKNESSES _____

	CONFERENCE DATE							
GENERAL COMMENTS oral reading general comprehension word meaning								
WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS								
COMPREHENSION SKILLS								

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE: Teacher Conference Sheet

STUDENT _____

WHAT WE DID TODAY:

WEAKNESSES:

IMPROVEMENTS:

THINGS TO BE WORKED ON:

nurse, school psychologist, or school reading specialist. Parents should be encouraged to take the child to an appropriate medical specialist.

WORD LISTS: INFORMAL PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS

Teachers instructing in an individualized program often need quick, expedient procedures for determining the difficulty level at which a student should be instructed in reading and for determining the student's word recognition strengths and weaknesses. The preparation and administration of word lists is often used as a diagnostic procedure.

Dolch Word List. The *Dolch Basic Sight Word List* is a list of 220 words most frequently used in our spoken and written language. The words comprising this list represent the service words of our language; words such as *the, had, it, run, get,* etc., appear on the list. Thus, the Dolch List contains the most frequently used pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and articles used in our oral and written language. Since most primary reading materials and a large portion of intermediate, junior and senior high school reading material contain words found on the Dolch List, it is important for teachers to assess whether or not each student instantaneously recognizes these words.

Procedures. The following procedures are suggested as steps to follow in using the Dolch words for assessing the student's instructional reading level and word recognition skills:

1. The reading teacher needs to prepare or secure a list of the Dolch Sight Words. Prepared lists can be purchased from Garrard Press: Champaign, Illinois.
2. The reading teacher should prepare or secure individual flash cards upon which each word appears.
3. The teacher should set aside at the beginning of the school year blocks of time ranging from fifteen minutes to one-half hour in which students will be tested over all 220 words. Plan on at least two weeks to accomplish this task.
4. During individual testing sessions, the teacher exposes, one at a time, the individual flash cards. Students are instructed to say the word that the printed form on the card represents. Students should respond within five seconds. The teacher should take care to hold each flash card in such a way that (1) the student can easily see the flash card, (2) the flash card is held motionless, and (3) the flash card is removed from the student's field of vision after five seconds.
5. The teacher records the student's responses on a list containing all the words.
6. Student reponses can be recorded in the following manner:
   a. If the word is pronounced correctly, draw a line through it.
   b. If the word is pronounced by the teacher for the student, write *T.A.* above the word. The initials *T.A.* represent "teacher aided words."
   c. If the student mispronounces or

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WHERE DO I START?

Begin with children, your current resources, and the attitude that your classroom should reflect a happy place in which children will spend a good deal of time.

Seeking, self-selection, and pacing are the underlying concepts of an individualized reading program. In order to accomplish these ends, an atmosphere of student-oriented choice and decision making should be created. Before one launches full scale into an individualized reading program, children must be given ample opportunities to make choices and decisions and have a sufficient amount of time to live with those freedoms and responsibilities. The teacher, of course, must respect the individuality of the student. He must be willing to accept the decisions children arrive at and define a "new" role for himself. The teacher needs to become one who guides or leads and assists children.

Students will need help in becoming independent learners. Therefore, time must be spent with the whole class and with small groups, as well as with individual youngsters, to ready or prepare them to work and learn in an independent manner. Very often, in-service for the school staff, or assistance from a reading specialist, is helpful in guiding the teacher before and during the inception of this new program. The degree of independence achieved in the classroom will depend upon the maturity of the children and the degree of security of the teacher. Of course, the attitude of all concerned is of major importance. For this program to be successful, the administration, staff, and students must share a positive desire and work at developing the program. Perhaps this should be a first in terms of consideration.

As the classroom atmosphere is being altered or enhanced, the next step might be to physically rearrange the room. The furniture should be located in such a manner so that individuals. as well as groups of children, can be accommodated. One section of the classroom might be arranged as a "Reading Area." Chairs and tables or small desks or an area rug could be placed in this segment of the room. Some overstuffed furniture or a rocking chair or throw pillows might also be used. Portable shelves or screens could be used to establish a

One can readily perceive clusters or groups of students who have similar needs. Skill development is an essential part of any reading program. The uniqueness of the individualized program is that the LEARNER is the central focus. He (the learner) determines what to read, at what pace to move, and decides in what follow-up activities to participate. The teacher uses his professional knowledge in order to guide the student and provide the instruction that will ensure success, maturity, and independence in reading.

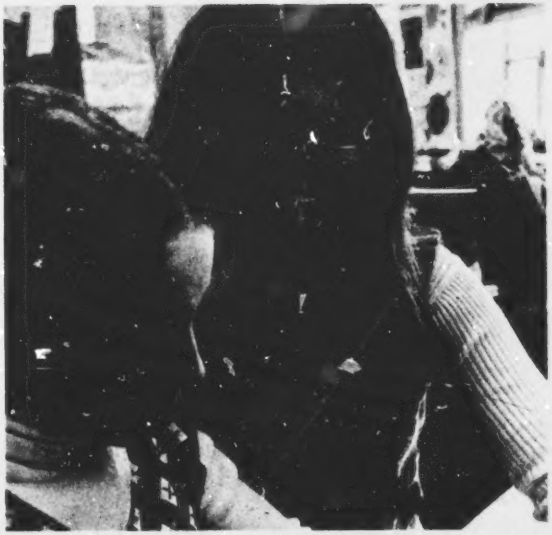
At this point, perhaps a practical check list of those beginning ingredients of an individualized reading program could be helpful.

1. Commitment – the teacher must be in favor of an individualized reading program.
2. The teacher must be prepared by having at least read about individualized reading instruction, thought about it seriously, and hopefully visited a school or classroom where this type of instructional pattern is being attempted.
3. In-service education is a good idea. This will enable the teachers to gather some new insights, tie together some of their own thoughts, allay fears, and discuss as a group the cooperative efforts they will share. It will also give the administrators an opportunity to become more fully acquainted with plans, procedures, and cooperative efforts.
4. School administrators must publicly give support to this concept. They need to become "actively" involved in the planning, in-service, and initial stages of the program. Ongoing support is also essential.
5. Get the children ready by developing an atmosphere of independence. Decision making and choice of independent activities are essential components.
6. Rearrange the room to accommodate a variety of activites.
7. Begin to determine reading levels of children.
8. Secure as many varied reading materials as possible.
9. Build a skills file with as many skill activities, work sheets, and exercises for each of the reading skills – these should be the type that require very little teacher direction.
10. Involve parents so they understand the goals or objectives of this reading program.
11. Constantly share experiences with your colleagues; don't be afraid to ask questions.
12. Establish some adequate means of record keeping. These can be modified and refined as the program matures.
13. Provide time for independent reading, sharing, activities, and personal conferences.
14. Begin grouping children by skill needs, once you have assessed commonality of needs.

15. Devise a list of broad questions that can be used during the conference period. These are questions that (with some modification) might fit most books read.
16. Begin thinking of means for evaluation of progress. The staff as a whole will need to deal with this as the conventional means of "grading" will probably not be adequate.
17. Set some realistic goals for yourself as well as the students. In this way, you will have some means by which you can evaluate your program.
18. Make contacts with the public library as well as other agencies or sources so books can be borrowed when necessary.
19. Allow parents to know that children can bring books from home. (This might encourage the bringing of books into many homes where they were previously absent.)
20. Be willing to be extremely flexible when planning the time for classroom activites. At first, it might seem as though you are only involved with "reading related" activities all day. This will come into proper perspective as the program routines, activities, and conferences become a normal ongoing part of the program.

THE CONFERENCE

The individual conference, a most important part of an individualized reading program, usually lasts approximately ten



minutes. The purpose for the conference can be as varied as the children in any given classroom. While many other reasons will continually develop, the following list typifies reasons for holding a conference, but in no way should this list limit the teacher.

a. discussion of book or story read
b. assessment of strengths and needs
c. determination of interests
d. assistance in selection of appropriate or more appropriate reading material
e. assistance with problems — personalized skill attention
f. oral reading with diagnosis as main intent
g. the satisfying of a need for one to one personalized attention.

He constantly wanders around, never finishes a book, does only what he is told to do, and is a disctraction to the other students.

Use some of the same suggestions made for the dependent child just discussed. Perhaps this student is not very independent but has developed a system of cover-up defenses because there are other problems. He might need constant personal attention and this is his way of getting it. Reading might never have been rewarding for him. Books might not be an integral part of the home scene. Reading may have been an ever present threat, frustation, or in fact, a failure situation for him. Encourage the student to select short books. These books should be well illustrated in order to provide many clues. Perhaps sports, animals, or hero type books might prove successful. Encourage his involvement in an activity group related somewhat to what he is reading or has read. "Build in" some successful experiences for this student. In between conferences, make a point of asking how he is doing or have him tell you a little about his book or activity he is involved in. Be rather specific and detailed when giving directions or instructions to this type child. He might need more structure than others. Gradually remove (a little at a time) the structure so he becomes more independent. Attempt to meet this child's parents and get some insight concerning his general behavioral characteristics.

QUESTION — How can I find time to read all of the trade books, magazines, and paperbacks the children will be reading?

You won't find the time to read all of these books. Get into the habit of quickly skimming some books. Read the captions on book jackets. Use the book review section of children's magazines and teacher guides distributed by such commercial publishers as Scholastic Book Services. Become familiar with your school or community librarian. There are reviews of children's books published monthly. Listen carefully to your students as they discuss books. Become familiar with some of the student's favorite T.V. programs. Many of them are the basis for popular novels. Get to know some of the writing styles of popular

authors of children's books. Very often they use the same general approach and format in many of their writings. Ask the type of questions of students that will yield information about the book. If the children write journals after reading, look at these journals carefully. They might be quite informative.

QUESTION – What do I do about children who wish to take books home?

Let them. Not only might the child do more reading, he will begin to develop habits and tastes that will help him develop as a "reader." Perhaps the parents might even borrow the book and new attitudes could be created at home. It is very possible that some children might read several books in between conference sessions. One potential problem surrounds the loss of books. Perhaps we ought not worry about that. The extent of loss will be minimal in comparison to the individual reading gain of the children. Again, paperback books also minimize costs due to loss and damage.

QUESTION – What are ways I can build up my classroom library, when there are few funds available from the school?

You might try having a book fair. Although some work is involved (a good P.T.A. project), the payoff is great. As students order books from the various book clubs, there are usually free bonus books given for a certain number of books ordered. Place these in the

classroom library. As children finish reading and swapping books they have ordered, they might like to "donate" them to the class library. Make up an impressive sticker that gets posted inside the front cover – This Book Has Been Donated By _____. Other sources of children's books might open up through suggestions from the school and local public librarians. Encourage children to secure library cards. In some cases, parents might find themselves spending time in the library for the first time since their own school days. Certainly include the basal readers you might have on hand. They contain many diverse stories. Reading materials also include such items as travel brochures, state and local

chamber of commerce information, foreign consulate materials, and any additional printed matter which might relate to the content studied in various subjects or of general interest to the class. Once your program gets going and you begin the accumulation of materials, the next step is to prove the value of your program to your school administrator and peers for a large budget for library books.

QUESTION – Speaking of books, how can I use all of the basal readers, supplementary books, workbooks, ditto masters, and other materials once I begin to individualize?

First of all, the basal reading texts are anthologies of good stories. These should be an integral part of the choice of reading material offered to the students. At the outset, some of your less secure students might prefer the security of reading many short stories in a book which represents familiarity. As for all of the other materials, these are invaluable to your skill development program. Just pull out what you want when the need arises, checking just to determine if the level of difficulty is correct. These can then become independent work activities or reinforcement materials.

QUESTION – If I were to begin an individualized reading program immediately, are there some alternatives I might consider in terms of first steps?

Yes, of course, there are. Some teachers find it very realistic and practical to begin by utilizing the current grouping structure. You might choose one group. This could be your "advanced" group, "slowest" group, or perhaps one of your "average" groups. Assess the students' reading levels and proceed. At the time you feel comfortable and the group is operating independently, you can add another group or other individual students. Keep adding until the entire class is included. Be certain, however, during this process that you are establishing workable procedures. These include the individual conferences, skills groups, activities, and the selection of books by the students. While you are still working with a portion of the class in the organizational plan prior to individualization, you can prepare them for the transition by cross-grouping for some skills instruction, allow the students freedom of choice of books one or two days a week, and, one at a time, assess the instructional and independent reading levels of the balance of the pupils.

Certainly, a secure teacher with some experience or one who has investigated individualized reading and visited individualized classrooms might desire to change over all at once. This is certainly a possibility.

A rationale for beginning with the most advanced students can include the fact that usually these students might be the most independent youngsters in the class. On the other hand, by individualizing the slowest students at the start, you are probably going to give more personalized attention to those who have the greatest need. However you wish to start, get going! Eventually you will be

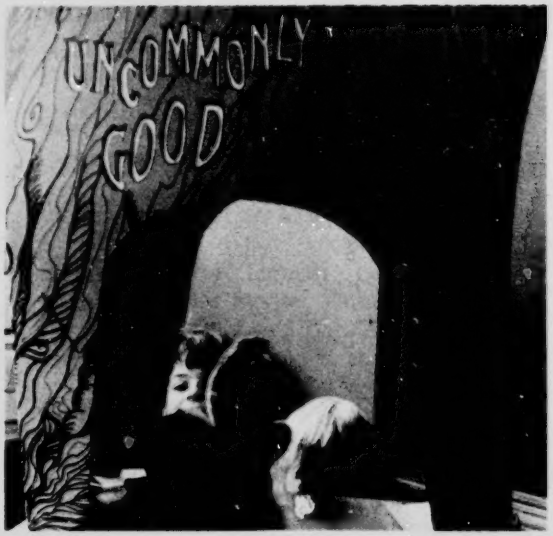
HOW CAN I EVALUATE?

Evaluation is a necessity in any educational endeavor. Both the effectiveness of the program and the growth of the student should be evaluated. This will afford the teacher an opportunity to view growth in relationship to the individual child as well as the program in general.

STUDENT GROWTH

Our students today face a far different world than students of the past. Education has changed from being purely "book learning" to learning through various modalities. It is most important for educators today to realize that the aim of reading instruction reaches further than just teaching children to read. Developing a joy of reading and assisting students in developing a lifetime process of enjoyment are aims which must be incorporated into the reading program. If these are components, then they, too, must be evaluated.

In evaluating pupil progress, both objective and subjective judgments must be made. This will give teachers evidence to support growth by pupils. Vocabulary development, comprehension, rate and study skills are areas which may be measured objectively. Both formal and informal testing techniques may be used to assess progress. Standardized tests, usually administered once a year, may be used by viewing present progress in relationship to historical progress. This should *not* be used as the only evaluative tool, however. Since evaluation should be continual, teachers must make use of other evaluative means throughout



the school year. Thus, standardized tests are only a small part of the total objective evaluation process. Teacher-made tests or other informal tests will add to the total objective view. Objective judgments may be made during a conference or small group activities.

Subjective evaluation is necessary to make the true picture of growth complete.

Donald E. Carline[1] lists the following areas which are difficult to measure but must be part of the total evaluation process:

1. development of a positive attitude in reading
2. fostering interest in reading
3. development of new areas of interest

4. realization that reading is the heart of the curriculum
5. selectivity of taste, discrimination and judgment
6. ability to discuss what has been read
7. free reading outside the classroom
8. new thinking patterns
9. greater sense of personal responsibility
10. self-pride.

Dr. Carline further states that growth in these areas cen be observed and evaluated through:

1. the kinds of books chosen by each child over a period of time
2. records based on observation and on individual conferences
3. creative writing which has been stimulated by reading
4. oral and written reports
5. evidence of creative productivity resulting from reading, such as painting, drawing, puppetry, diorama, experiments, and homemade projects
6. use of vocabulary
7. sense of humor, both subtle and general
8. use of all reference materials for research topics of interest
9. activities out of school which may have resulted from reading
10. reaction to reading and reporting made by others, including the teacher.

No one can deny that children need basic reading skills; however, if these skills are developed and the students find little or no enjoyment in reading, what really has been accomplished? Students, who find reading exciting as well as possessing the knowledge of "how to read," are true readers who will pursue reading activities as part of everyday life.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

In evaluating individualized reading, the teacher must realize her responsibility in the total program. Her main task is to assist each student in developing his highest reading potential. Results of cognitive skill growth may not be widened immediately; however, the affective domain of reading instruction should show observable growth.

It is important for the teacher to return to the original reasons for beginning the program which are listed in the first section. Only through reaffirming those convictions in light of the observed growth will the teacher be able to truly evaluate her program.

Dr. Carline[1] concludes his article on program evaluation in this manner: "The concept of evaluation in individualized reading is a very critical one. To understand and apply it is no easy task. One must first understand the true purpose and need for individualizing a reading program before one becomes perceptive about the process of evaluation. Good teaching of reading is founded upon the reading process and how it is developed. The understanding of the process of learning is based essentially upon the developmental characteristics of growth and maturity within each child. Such insight leads to the discovery of flexible teaching procedures which permit individualized reading. Teaching activities without such a basis may be fruitless."

Perhaps after being involved in an individualized reading program, you will find yourself saying what teachers of individualized reading have been heard to say:

"Never have I worked so hard and had more fun in watching my children blossom into productive readers who thoroughly enjoy reading."

[1] Donald E. Carline, *The Individualized Reading Program: A Guide for Classroom Teaching,* Eleventh Annual Convention International Reading Association, Proceedings 1966, Volume II, Part 3, Chapter 7, pp 44-49, Chapter 8, pp 50-56.

Toki

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE: Student planning sheet
To be completed by student

STUDENT PLANNING SHEET

NAME: (Jill Maloney)

WEEK OF: (Jan. 6-10)

Present book or story being read: (Pippi Goes on Board)

Things to do this week:

Monday - (Read "Pippi," activity table with word game.)

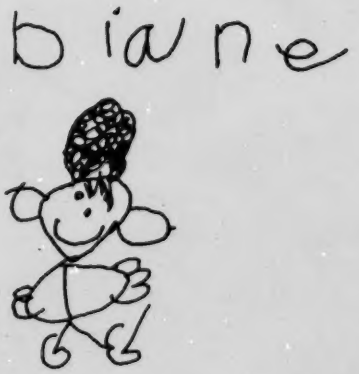
Tuesday - (Work on dictionary with new words from "Pippi." Read short stories from magazine rack.)

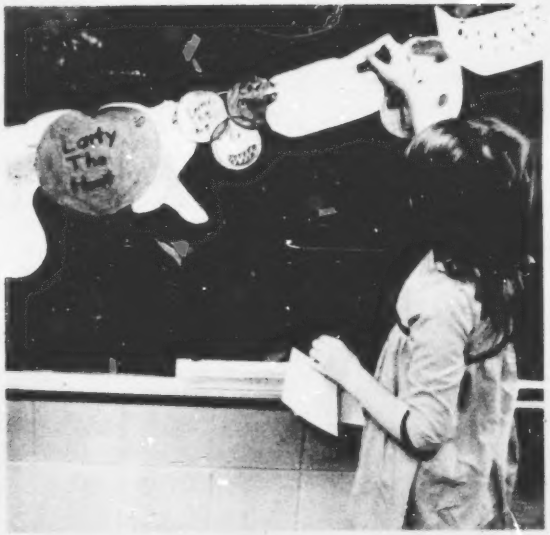
Wednesday - (Conference with teacher, finish "Pippi.")

Thursday - (Select new book.)

administering the personalized attention that most of the students need.

There are probably a multitude of questions each and every teacher will have. For further information, consult the inclusions in the bibliography, visit classrooms where individualized reading programs have been started or are already well under way, and discuss your questions with reading teachers, reading supervisors, and your own colleagues. Many of you will share the same frustrations. Together, you can solve many problems.





vary from teacher to teacher, it should be constantly kept in mind that the record be designed to help the reader by being a reminder for the teacher as well as a foundation for future teachers. These records may also be used to report progress to parents.

STUDENT CHANGE

Just as the degree of skill development will vary among students, the degree of self-discipline and the ability to plan will vary. Some students will be able to immediately plan activities while others need a great deal of guidance during the first weeks of the program.

The concept of self-selection and self-pacing will take on different meanings to different students. For some, a model or example will prove beneficial and thus should be provided. Teachers will soon observe, however, that students readily desire some control over their own destiny and actively engage in meaningful activities when given the opportunity.

Another student change which may be observed is the tutorial effect which evolves from students of varying abilities working together. Tutorial techniques may be used in small groups or simply on a volunteer basis as the need arises. All students have the ability to aid others and limits should not be placed by simply allowing the "fast to help the slow."

The amount of noise or movement within the classroom will vary; however, it will be found that the noise is meaningful and the movement is organized.

At times, the teacher will be amazed to observe her students and realize that with little guidance each is actively engaged in an activity which is meaningful. Somehow, those students who constantly lost their places when doing basal work with the entire group or who needed the directions explained four times are now working happily, contentedly, and productively.

Kevin

WHAT CAN I DO WITH . . . . ?

This section will be devoted to the exploration of alternatives. These alternative solutions will be directed to questions that are commonly raised when beginning an individualized reading program.

QUESTION — How do I deal with a classroom of 30 or more children and attempt to teach them all individually?

You don't. It is physically impossible to teach each child individually each day. There are many alternatives, however, you might explore. Look into such teaching strategies as peer teaching and cross-age tutoring. These might help. Another helpful idea might be to use a skills chart which lists skills across the top and children's names down the left side. As a student indicates in some way that he is encountering difficulty or while you are observing the students for a while, scanning the vertical column will indicate all of those youngsters who are having difficulty in a common area. This can become a skill group. There will be times, of course, when you will need to have a majority of the class or the entire class together for a lesson — this is perfectly acceptable.

Another means of self-instruction would include the use of teacher-made, as well as commercially prepared, skill practice lessons. These can be filed in easily accessible places in the classroom. They can be coded so you can readily direct the student to the desired activity sheet by means of the coding process. Once he has completed the activity, the teacher can immediately direct the student to the next exercise. The student's folder would reflect which activities have been completed and which skills have been mastered.

QUESTION — What do I do about the insecure child who lacks the independence to select his own choice of book to read?

This is the time when the teacher's role as guide comes into focus. The teacher might select several books which conform to the reading level, interest, hobby, or desire of the student. Allow the student to choose from this assortment. This student obviously needs assistance, guidance, security, and direction. Help him the first few times, gradually decreasing the nature of assistance. Have rather frequent conferences (very brief ones) with him to make him feel secure. Constantly encourage him and praise his choices. Reinforce constantly the concept that if the book is too difficult or not of interest, he may exchange it for another. Have patience if the child is constantly changing books at the outset. Be sure to accept his choice even if you feel it might be inappropriate. Discuss books with the child or have a peer discuss books with the child. He will become independent — don't fear.

QUESTION — what do I do about the student who has fleeting interests or who doesn't appear to have any interests at all?